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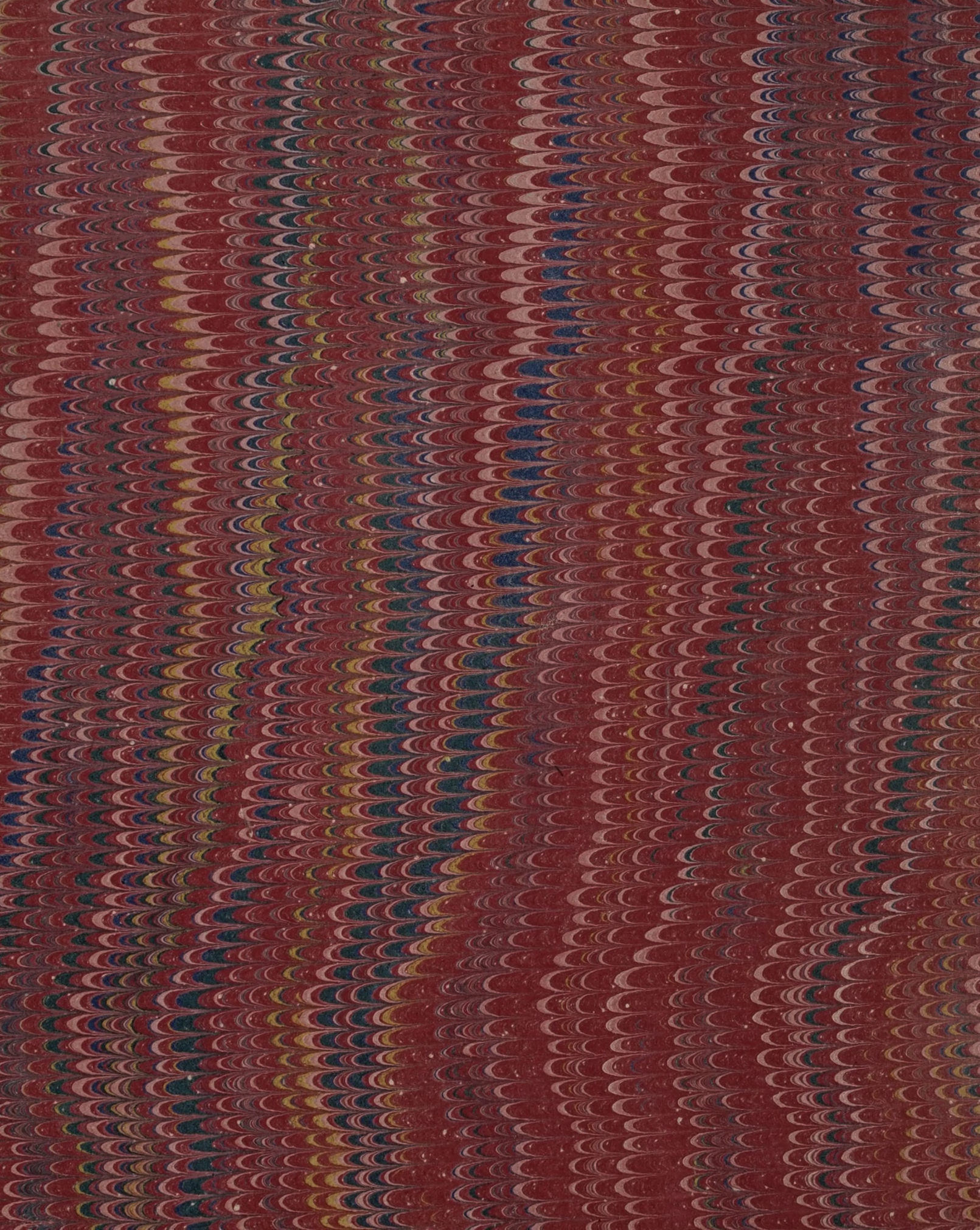
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# How it Ended.

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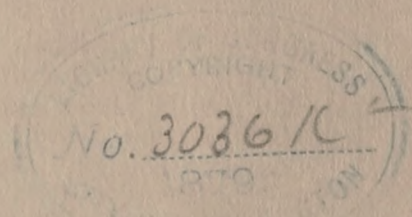




# HOW IT ENDED.

BY  
MARIE FLAACKE.

"'Tis better to have loved and lost  
Than ne'er to have loved at all."



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# HOW IT ENDED.



## CHAPTER I.

### ROSELAWN.

OLD Sol never looked down upon a fairer scene than that displayed beneath his burning gaze one morning, several years ago, in one of the Southern States. Precisely where it was located it is not necessary to mention, for it would not increase the interest of "this ower true tale," nor disclose the identity of the parties concerned. Suffice it to say, nature and art, combined with taste and wealth, had made Roselawn one of the handsomest country residences in the State; while fate and fact erected there a stage upon which a touching little drama was played—the actors not being mere pup-



pets who recited their parts by rote, but were veritable beings, who had lived and loved and suffered.

Roselawn was the summer residence of Mrs. Morton Donance, a wealthy widow, with only one child to share her vast store of the good things of life, a saucy, merry, beautiful girl of eighteen, the belle of the county, and her mother's spoiled darling. Possibly, beautiful is scarcely an appropriate name to apply to Kate Donance's many attractions. Her features were fine, her eyes a mischievous brown, and her curly chestnut hair was so many meshes in which were ensnared her willing captives ; yet it was her gay, saucy manners, unceasing liveliness, and thousands of little coquettish wiles that captivated her admirers more than any special beauty of feature or coloring.

Mrs. Donance usually spent the winter months at the capital of her native State, removing to her suburban residence at the first approach of summer, when Kate filled the roomy old mansion with her young friends, and by her contagious example put



the entire neighborhood in a constant state of amusement and gayety.

Roselawn, taking its name from the extensive roseries which surrounded the house and monopolized various parts of the estate, was famous for its beautiful grounds, smooth lawns, and magnificent collections of plants and flowers. The gray-stone mansion itself, a pleasing combination of the antique and modern, with innumerable bay-windows and small balconies jutting out from every imaginable nook and crevice, covered with luxuriant vines and creepers, stood upon a slight elevation, against a background of stately old trees and well-kept shrubbery ; while the terraces, rivalling green velvet in hue and smoothness, gently sloped to the bright, sparkling river, which skirted the broad domains of the Donance homestead and ran merrily along through sunshine and shade until it became lost in the embrace of the restless ocean.

Upon the morning in question the rustic benches and chairs upon the lawn were occupied by Kate's



companions, all busily engaged in discussing plans for the day's pleasure. There were about a dozen "belles and gallants gay," all of them wealthy, most of them possessors of a generous supply of beauty, and a few of them excessively fascinating. Kate, the most perfect hostess, insomuch that she permitted her guests great latitude in pleasing themselves, formed one of an animated group discussing a new arrival at the nearest neighbor's—old Mrs. De Kaye's. Such of Kate's friends as had previously met the gentleman were loud in their praises of his morals, manners, and money. He was so fine-looking, so dignified, so courtly! Indeed, the changes were rung so steadily in his favor, that incipient signs of jealousy were unmistakably developing themselves in the hearts and minds of the gentlemen present, and, one and all, they were ready to turn the cold shoulder upon their fair but fickle friends.

"It's all very well for you to rave over Burton," said Harry Farquar, laughingly; "but let me tell



you, young ladies, that all your charms will be powerless to effect the faintest impression upon his adamant heart. He's a woman-hater of the most pronounced type, is totally impervious to the blandishments of your sex, and, in a word, will have none of you !”

“Indeed !” retorted Miss Joe Lacy, with an indignant toss of her head, “wouldn't it be more polite for you to give *us* the benefit of the doubt ? Possibly none of us would have *him* !”

Further reply was prevented by Kate's low warning :

“Hush, children ! When one speaks of angels one often hears their wings ! Behold, the conquering hero comes—escorting Aunt Janet !”

All eyes were turned in the direction her gaze indicated, just in time to see the expected guests turn into a lane beyond the lodge, and disappear in the shadow of the woods.

There was much hearty laughter among the gentlemen, and considerable pouting among the ladies, as Farquar exclaimed :



“There! didn’t I say so? Aunt Janet had almost persuaded him, but just at the turning-point—*i.e.*, the lodge-gate—his courage left him, and he persuaded the old lady to forsake the broad highway that leads to destruction”—with a wicked look at Kate—“and take the narrow path toward home!”

“Thank you,” Kate retorted, with a low bow to the mischief-loving Harry, “destruction won’t shipwreck you, Impudence; of that you may rest assured!”

At which Mr. Farquar looked a trifle uncomfortable, for his devotion to saucy Kate was so transparent that a general smile followed her remark, and some merriment at his expense ensued.

“But, Kate,” exclaimed Maggie Conway, “who is Gerald Burton, any way? I’m sure I don’t remember ever having heard of him, and I’ve been out—oh, for ages! Is he Mrs. De Kaye’s nephew, an old settler, or—what?”

“Well,” said Kate, “if a failure to occupy the



first and second positions indicated by your query promotes him to the third, that's *what* he is, my dear ?”

“ I think I can supply the information you desire, Miss Conway,” exclaimed Ned Thornton ; “ for he was a classmate of mine at college. He was one of the gayest fellows in our set, rich enough to satisfy any one’s ambition, and a general favorite with every one. When he came of age, he left college, and, as heir to his father’s lands and bank-notes, settled down into a sober, studious way of living, having given up his old associates and habits, and turned over a new leaf. I met him in Paris, about a year ago, and was greatly impressed by his changed manners and appearance. He had spent the time between our chance meeting and his withdrawal from college, with the exception of a month at home, in Europe, and had formed no plans for an immediate return. It seemed to me, during the few hours of his society I enjoyed, that something had occurred to dispel all his youthfulness, and substitute



in its place a sedate gravity remarkable in so young a man. He must be—let me see—yes, about twenty-five years of age; no older certainly! He was a handsome fellow, and a capital fellow, too! There, that's all I know, and I think I deserve a great deal of credit for volunteering such a lengthy explanation on such a warm day as this, too. Miss Kate, how high is the mercury?"

"Out of sight, Mr Thornton! A fact, I assure you," she added, as they all laughed. "I sent mammy to see how it stood this morning, and she returned, saying: 'I 'clar for it, Miss Kate, the little silver thing-a-my done gone clear out of sight!'"

"Then, if that is the case," returned Thornton, when the merriment had subsided, "we had better try the water for a little coolness. Who's for a sail, or a row?"

In the merry bustle and confusion that ensued Gerald Burton was forgotten, and the party descended to the river, where, in a few moments the sound of oars and the rattling of sails mingled with the laughing voices and gay calls.



Roselawn was unusually gay that summer, for Kate had determined to have a season of thorough enjoyment and jollity, and to effect that desired consummation had assembled a dozen of her most congenial friends, of both sexes. Picnics, archery matches, croquet, theatricals, to say nothing of boating by moonlight as well as by day, made the hours pass merrily and swiftly, leaving pleasant recollections of past enjoyments, and anticipations of what the future had in prospective.

---

## CHAPTER II.

### NOOKSIDE.

NOOKSIDE, the grounds adjoining the Donance property, and its only rival in all that region of exclusive elegance and aristocratic pride, was the residence of old Mrs. De Kaye, and the constant home of the owner, a confirmed invalid. But though debarred by ill-health from participating in the gayeties



of the summer, the old lady was a great favorite with the young people of the neighborhood, and Nookside was noted for its hospitalities, and its owner's kindness and proverbial geniality.

Having no children of her own, Mrs. De Kaye constantly surrounded herself with numerous nieces and nephews, who, with friends of their selection, took possession of the beautiful place, and exercised their own sweet wills in regard to matters and things, though acknowledging without reservation the imperceptible power of the gentle old lady who managed to prepare for them, despite her feebleness, countless pleasures and amusements.

Petted, caressed, and loved, the tiny old lady, with her snow-white hair, bright eyes, and old-school manners and graces, formed a pleasing contrast to the fair, fresh, young faces about her, and was as lovely with her mature charms as the belle of the coterie, who, crowned by youth and beauty, shared with her the reign of queendom.

Suffering had made her peculiarly thoughtful of



the sorrows of others, and given her a keen perception to descry trouble, however carefully disguised. The small rivalries between her young people, not always harmless, were quietly but effectually adjusted by her gentle intervention, and many displays of incipient jealousy were nipped in the bud by that skilful tact which disarmed suspicion of interference and engendered harmony. Bright, cheery, full of love and care for her guests, she made Nookside so attractive that Kate Donance sometimes pretended to be jealous of her power, and declared she was setting up a rival establishment in order to deprive Roselawn of its importance. Between the two houses there was almost constant connection; and Mrs. De Kaye, as much to her own astonishment as to Kate's delight, was often induced to spend days at a time, with all her young friends, in the house on the hill, sometimes driving there in her low, easy carriage, or propelled in her invalid-chair, attended by her court.

Not a day passed without a detachment from each



house holding meetings and planning enjoyments in which all were to participate; and the "rival houses," as Kate termed them, mingled so thoroughly that it was almost impossible to decide which party was entertaining the other. If Kate's friends *rendezvoused* at Nookside in the morning, it was to form some plan of amusement to be carried out at Roselawn in the afternoon; and if a full meeting was called at the house on the hill in the afternoon, it was followed by an evening's entertainment at Mrs. De Kaye's. So that an interchange of courtesies and friendliness was constantly being devised, and the formal stately acquaintanceship deepened, between many of the summer friends, into firm regard.

It would be difficult to find a group of girls more fascinating and pretty than that assembled at the two houses. But among them all, June Atherton, Kate's cousin, was indisputably the fairest and sweetest. Pretty girls, gay girls, striking girls, were plentiful; but June was beautiful, and, better still, good and



true. An orphan, an heiress, her own mistress, greatly attached to Mrs. Donance and Kate, she resided with them more months in the year than she spent in her own town house, and returned fully all the love lavished upon her. Kate's generous nature gave no thought to the fact that June's beauty far exceeded her own, but with almost a masculine eye for feminine loveliness she raved about her cousin's dark eyes, and fair complexion, and composed so many impromptu sonnets to her charms that her friends mischievously dubbed her June's adorer—satire which she cheerfully endured, for she loved June, and admired her for many traits of character not inherent in her own fly-away nature.

Kate was a flirt by nature, June was nothing of the kind. Indeed, so little did she care for admiration that Kate vowed she would die an old maid, and drew many pathetic word-pictures of her probable fate, and lonely life, to all of which June willingly agreed, and professed profound liking for, even to the companionship of two old cats and a parrot. But



in truth the lonely life of a "maiden all forlorn" did not alarm Miss Atherton in the least, and none of Kate's admonitions proved effectual in convincing her that it was her duty to marry.

Why should she, since she had never yet met the man she felt she could love?

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### CHAPTER III.

#### AUNT JANET'S HERO.

IF AUNT JANET, as she was familiarly known to her guests, felt a deeper regard for one relative more than another, or was at all inclined to be at all partial to one of them, Gerald Burton was the favored mortal; though, indeed, no ties of relationship bound him to Mrs. De Kaye, and her regard for him was but the outgrowth of the friendship she had shared with his parents.

Deep down in the old lady's heart was hidden a romance, or the remembrance of one, that all her joys



and sorrows had been powerless to efface ; for Gerald's father and the pretty Janet Moore of other days had been parted by the stern decree of a parent who thought little of love unless counterbalanced by gold and position, and young Burton possessed neither. The years of separation demanded by Mr. Moore wrought changes beyond Janet's power to prevent, and when next she met her discarded lover she was the wife of another and older man, and, strange as it may seem to romantic minds, a happy, loving wife as well.

Gerald Burton and herself remained the best of friends until the former's death, when he consigned his young wife and children to Janet De Kaye's thoughtful friendship, knowing how warm a feeling existed between his wife and Janet. As years passed, circumstances made it necessary for Mrs. De Kaye to move to a distant part of the State, and frequent intercourse between the two families was impossible. Then, too, she passed several years in Europe, and on her return took possession of



Nookside, where for three or four years she had remained constantly.

This summer a longing to see her old friends prompted her to write to Mrs. Burton, and request the favor of having the society of her son and daughter during the summer months. In reply, she learned that Jeannie was absent from home, but Gerald would gladly visit her ; so with great pleasure she looked forward to the arrival of Gerald's son, intending to welcome him as one of her own. She had last seen him when he was but a college youth of eighteen, full of fun and life, and the very image of his handsome, imperious father.

Knowing nothing of his career during the years of her absence, she expected to find him the same light-hearted fellow, just as full of mischief and frolic, with perhaps a shade more of thoughtfulness and repose of manner ; consequently, it was a rude shock to meet, upon his arrival, a grave, quiet man, dignified, handsome, courtly, but with no traces of boyishness in feature or manner, and not a vestige



of his former light-heartedness or the careless *insouciance* of youth.

Poor Aunt Janet! The change shocked her. Instead of her merry, dashing godson, who had won all hearts by his brightness, she found a grave, quiet man, almost stern in his demeanor, with the saddest eyes, and the greatest amount of self-control she had witnessed in a human being. Whatever may have been the cause of the metamorphose he guarded his secret well, so well that though several of Aunt Janet's guests were old friends of his, they apparently saw nothing strange in the change which so puzzled the surprised old lady.

Perhaps something of her anxiety was exhibited in her searching looks during the first few days of his visit, for one morning, finding her alone in her little sitting-room, he said, with a smile :

“Aunt Janet, do you doubt my identity? Ever since my arrival you have regarded me with such piercing glances that I almost believe you think me an impostor. It is myself truly, and no one else.



Won't you believe me, or must I exhibit my credentials ?”

“ Oh, no !” she answered, laughingly, “ it *is* you, but you are so changed—that is—I mean—”

“ That you find a great difference in the happy, careless boy you knew seven years ago ! I have changed very much, I know ; but you must make some allowances for different habits and tastes, as well as a difference in age and disposition.”

“ Yes,” she replied, hesitatingly ; “ only—surely, Gerald, *your* life cannot be so unhappy that it has made you a grave, quiet man, old before your time, and finding no pleasure in the merry life around you !”

“ A man's life,” he answered, briefly, with a compression of his lips, “ is what he makes it. I have no right to complain of mine, for I have made it what it is. Aunt Janet, would *you* feel light-hearted and gay if you knew a terrible fate was overshadowing you, liable at any moment to crush you beneath its weight of despair ? Would *you* find



existence a pleasure were you continually compelled to repair from the enjoyments a man of my age delights in, rather than by the indulgence aggregate your remorse and pain ?”

“ I don’t understand you, Gerald,” she replied, amazed at his vehement words ; “ the past few years have told me nothing of your sorrows or joys, and I’m as ignorant concerning your meaning as the veriest stranger. Can’t you confide in me, and tell me what the trouble is ?”

He turned away from the kind old face, touched by its loving expression ; but even as a reply trembled upon his lips, Kate entered the room accompanied by June, and he only had time to say, hastily, as they approached Mrs. De Kaye :

“ Some day, Aunt Janet, I will tell you all !”



## CHAPTER IV.

“WHAT COULD IT BE?”

IN the seclusion of her own room, that night, Aunt Janet reflected upon Gerald's words. As she said, the years of silence, though powerless to sever the ties of friendship, had debarred her from the intimacy which had so long existed between Mrs. Burton and herself. In all that time she had heard nothing whatever of the Burtons, and was quite ignorant of any changes that may have occurred in their lives or fortunes. That Gerald's troubles were not of a pecuniary nature, she was positive; and as all the disagreeabilities of this world are occasioned by love or money, or the lack of either or both, she at length decided that possibly he was in love, or had been jilted, or something of a similar nature. More troubled by his manner than she cared to acknowledge, she determined to watch him closely,



obtain some clue, and persuade him to confide in her, trusting to her womanly tact and skill to release him from his bondage.

Poor Gerald ! her tender heart ached with the sympathy she could not express by words. She was very fond of him for his father's sake as well as his own, and was pained and perplexed by the great change in his former frank, boyish nature. Only monetary difficulties or disappointment in love, she felt assured, could be the reason of it, and knowing of the immense fortune left him by his father, she decided that undoubtedly his heart had not been equally as well guarded as had been his bank account.

That impression was strengthened by Gerald's evident disinclination for feminine society, and his quiet but persistent avoidance of Aunt Janet's friends. Without being absolutely rude, he repelled by his studied coldness all attempts on the part of Kate and her companions to draw him within the charmed circle ; and, by his apparent indifference,



received the title of "Woman-hater," or, as Kate saucily told Mrs. De Kaye, when in one of her confidential moods, he was "a double-distilled compound of *hauteur* and iciness, too far above the level of petty worldlings to mingle in their pleasures!"

In vain Aunt Janet defended her favorite. Kate had determined to dislike him, and nothing could induce her to alter her unfavorable opinion. "I admire a dignified man," she declared, "but not an icicle! There's no more animation in your Gerald Burton than there is in one of your old family portraits, and he's not half as handsome either! He might suit June, but I detest him! And if she wants him she is perfectly welcome to all she can get from him in the way of attention or admiration."

"Wait until you understand him better, my dear," was Aunt Janet's reply; "I am sure you will think differently then. Perhaps, too, June won't want him either; but he is a man whose attentions and regard any woman should be proud to receive."

Kate's careless words concerning June, though



spoken in jest, aroused thoughts in Mrs. De Kaye's mind that had frequently intruded since Gerald's arrival. She was very fond of the two cousins, but she loved June dearly, and would gladly have seen her Gerald's wife. And why should it not be? Gerald was young, rich, and free, without fault or vice, so far as she knew, and a man who would make an excellent husband. June was equally favored in regard to beauty and wealth, and a most charming girl in every respect. To be sure, they were both exceedingly indifferent to each other's attractions, and June's disregard for deeper attentions from her admirers than those inspired by simple friendliness was but a variation of Gerald's unsusceptibility to the many charms of the fair girls who would willingly have won him from his grave moods.

There is a propensity for match-making in every woman's nature, and Aunt Janet was no exception to the general rule. To her loving old heart, the thought of a union between the two persons upon



whom so much of her affection was lavished was fraught with great joy. What wonder is it, then, to find her devising ways and opportunities for throwing her favorites together, and giving them every possible aid towards effecting the devoutly desired consummation ?

And her efforts were well rewarded. June, usually so chary of her friendship, found herself greatly attracted by the grave, silent man, and gave him such glimpses of her bright, joyous nature as disturbed his self-enforced avoidance, and aroused a desire for more of her good-will and regard. Gradually as he mingled more and more with the gay company, his face lost its gloomy shadows, and his brown eyes often gleamed and sparkled with the old mischief and merriment Aunt Janet so liked to see. Kate, agreeably surprised by the change, and quick to note the cause, admitted him to her favor, and sang his praises without reserve, greatly to the dismay of her devoted admirer Harry Farquar.

And June ? Of course she was not insensible to



the influence she possessed ; but only a very conceited or very silly woman fancies every man her lover who yields to her the chivalrous respect of a loyal nature, and June, being neither, gave no thought to what the end would be, until the question was forced upon her attention. It was June who drew him out and made him a most brilliant conversationalist ; June who made him drop his impenetrable mask ; June who changed his stern demeanor into merry humor ; June who brought back the old-time light to his eyes, and banished their sad gravity ; yet even Kate could not tell whether she felt more than a passing regard for him, or was sensible of where Gerald's admiration was leading him. But although June was too much a woman of the world to exhibit her pleasure in her new acquaintance, Aunt Janet knew her too well to think she was only amusing herself with a slight flirtation. Had she not enjoyed Gerald's society, or appreciated his preference, she would have shown him no encouragement, or given him any opportunity to cultivate her friendship.



So day after day passed, until Gerald's visit lengthened into a period of two months ; but still he evinced no desire to leave Nookside. Mrs. De Kaye observed the fact with great delight, and Kate began to wonder if it was possible that her stately cousin was at last about to descend to the level of ordinary mortals, and be guilty of the hackneyed but essentially womanish folly of falling in love !

---

## CHAPTER V.

### SHADOWS.

“ At whom are you gazing so intently, June ? ”

June drew back from the window quickly, and turned a slightly flushed face towards her mischievous cousin as she answered :

“ How you startled me, Kate ! Why, I was merely looking at the river ! ”

“ H-m-m, I may be wrong, June, dear, but it



strikes me I can catch a glimpse of a white straw hat down among the trees, and I wouldn't be surprised to discover that said hat is reposing upon Gerald Burton's head. Ah, I was right! 'Tis he, and here he comes, looking as solemn and stern as though he were a careworn man of forty, instead of being a youth of twenty-five. Nonsense, June," she added, a little impatiently, "don't run away! He's looking directly up at this window, and I *know* he doesn't wish to see me!"

But June had already disappeared, and Kate was obliged to greet Mr. Burton when he approached the house, and inquired if Miss Atherton was at home.

"No," replied Kate, leaning from the low window to speak to him, "Miss Atherton has just left me. She—"

"Miss Kate, you don't mean she has left Rose-lawn!" Gerald Burton's face turned so pale at Kate's jesting words that she repented having uttered them.

"I didn't mean *that*; of course not!" she re-



turned, quickly. "See, there she is, walking towards the river; and I do wish you would tell her not to walk so far in this warm sun! Are you coming in? No? Well, stop and take lunch with us when you both decide to return."

"I will be pleased to do so," he answered smiling; "and now—"

"And now you wish to say good-morning!" interrupted Kate. "Well, you may, and to show that I cherish no ill-will in return for your evident readiness to forsake me, I'll give you permission to take June out in my little Zip!"

"That, indeed, would be heaping coals of fire upon my head, and seems very much as though you were rewarding me for being naughty."

"See that you appreciate my generosity!"

"I certainly do," he replied, and lifting his hat, he sauntered away from the house, and retraced his steps down the path leading to the river.

Kate remained at the window until she saw her cousin and Mr. Burton embark in her little boat,



then she left the room. Her appearance on the lawn among her guests was the signal for a game of croquet, and in the excitement of the sport she speedily ceased to think of the wandering couple.

Ah, no, she could not completely lose all recollection of the absentees, though her game was very absorbing ; but bonnie Kate, being a woman, could not resist the temptation of selecting an eligible partner for her cousin, and even croquet, fascinating as it was, could not entirely efface all remembrance of the two wanderers in the woods. Truly she had resolved to have June marry, and many were the good " catches " she had thrown in June's way ; but June was obdurate, and resolutely refused to play the agreeable to any of the chosen ones ; and though Kate was too good a tactician to allow her defeat to be apparent, she was almost in despair at the prospective failure of her plans.

Only that morning she had informed her cousin, in the most solemn manner imaginable, that she was destined to be an old maid ; and had elevated her



hands with mock horror at June's reply, that she "didn't care."

"Of course you don't," retorted Kate; "but for my part I think you are far too good and pretty to live and die an old maid! And really, June, I consider it my positive duty to find you a husband. It is highly improbable that you, of all people, should fail to discover the

"Twin soul that halves your own,"

and if you won't exert yourself to secure your proper half, I'll have to do it for you."

June made some laughing reply, and then the conversation ended.

Possibly, though, she was thinking of Kate's jesting words when her cousin entered the room half an hour later, and found her standing by the window gazing abstractedly out upon the river. Any way, when Gerald Burton approached, she hastily seized her garden-hat and left the room. Avoiding the broad walk which led directly to the



water, she traversed a side path until she reached the bank of the sparkling stream ; then, throwing her hat upon the grass, she seated herself upon a rustic bench, beneath a huge maple, and soon became absorbed in what was evidently a continuation of the reverie Kate had disturbed. She smiled quietly to herself as she recalled Kate's fear that she would never marry ; but, after thinking of the occurrences of the past few months, she was almost inclined to believe there was some foundation for her cousin's pretended alarm. More than one heart and hand had been offered for her acceptance since her arrival at Roselawn, but all had been rejected. She would only marry the man she loved, and she was quite convinced that she did not—

But at this point she paused abruptly, and pondered upon the partly entertained thought. Was it really true that she loved no one ? Could she look far into the depths of her heart and candidly affirm that it contained no sentiment but that of friendly regard towards all men ? Among her many admir-



ers and warm friends was there no one particular person whom she respected more and liked better than all the rest ?

“ Miss Atherton ! ”

Startled by the interruption June sprang to her feet, quite frightened out of her customary composure. The soft sward gave no warning of approaching footsteps, and so deeply engaged with her own thoughts had she been, that she was not aware of Gerald Burton's presence until he addressed her.

“ Did I alarm you ? ” he exclaimed, as he stooped to restore the book she had dropped ; “ how thoughtless of me to steal upon you unawares ! ”

“ Don't mention it, please, or I shall feel that it was quite ridiculous to be frightened at—at— ”

“ At nothing, ” he interpolated, smiling at her hesitation.

“ No, indeed ! ” she protested, “ I have no intention of saying anything so rude ! I was so busily engaged with my own profound meditations that I had begun to consider myself a modern edition of



Robinson Crusoe. It is an easy thing to become lost in reflection, you know, and it is an amusement in which I often indulge."

"I trust that in this instance, at least, your thoughts were of pleasant persons and things?"

June's face flushed slightly as she remembered the subject upon which she had been meditating. She was silent a moment, then replied :

"They were not so pleasant that I need regret your interruption."

"And may I offer, as substitute, a row in the Zip?"

"The exchange will make me your debtor," she answered, smiling. "Is the Zip moored? I thought Kate intended to row over to see Minnie Foster?"

"I have her permission to use the boat, as she postponed making the call until to-morrow. It is just the morning for a row, and I am sure you will enjoy it."

"I am quite positive I shall," June responded, as



they walked along the bank to the boat-house. "Are you sure it will not be too warm for you though? Rowing, never a cooling exercise, will be uncomfortably tiresome and warm in the sun, and I don't wish you to regret your kindness, or to consider me more of a burden than a pleasure."

They had reached the Zip's landing, and Burton stooped to unfasten the chain from the lock. As she uttered those words, however, he turned quickly, facing her as he exclaimed, earnestly :

"Miss Atherton, you are jesting! You certainly must know that I ask for no greater happiness than the pleasure of serving you! 'More trouble than pleasure,' " he repeated, reproachfully; "how can you say so? Wait," he added, as she was about to step into the boat, "you must promise never to say that again!"

He caught her hands, and held them tightly in his own. June glanced up into his face, about to make some laughing reply; but as she raised her eyes to his the words died upon her lips, for the



love-light she had often fancied she saw in their depths certainly gleamed in them now, and with such intensity that she could not meet it. With averted head she uttered the promise, and was released. Gerald followed her into the boat, and after arranging the cushions and getting her comfortably seated he took up the oars and pushed off from shore.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### *THE SHADOWS DEEPEN.*

JUNE leaned over the boat's edge, and drew her hand through the water as Gerald's steady strokes sent the little craft out in deeper waters. They were both silent for a few moments, then he asked, briefly : "Which way shall we go, Miss Atherton ; have you any preference ?"

"Yes," she answered, glancing at him shyly,



“I’d like to go to the spot Kate calls Shady Glen. Do you know where it is?”

“I believe I do,” Mr. Burton responded, a mischievous smile lurking in his eyes and upon his lips. If my memory serves me rightly—and I think it does—we walked down there yesterday!”

June laughed despite her embarrassment, and, the ice being thus broken, their conversation resumed its usual friendliness. A half hour’s row brought them to the place romantic Kate had designated Shady Glen; and as a few quick short strokes sent the boat far in among the cool shadows formed by the trees which shaded the river on either bank, Gerald drew in his oars and let the boat float at will.

“How lovely every thing is!” exclaimed June, as she took off her hat and let the cool, fresh breeze ruffle her hair.

Gerald made no reply. It *was* lovely, but “it,” to him, meant the sweet face opposite. Lovely? She was far more than that to him, yet could he, dare he tell her so? Many, many times during the



past week he had longed to confess how deeply and truly he loved her, but the confession trembled upon his lips and remained unuttered. Almost unconsciously, now, he sat and gazed so steadily, so longingly at her, with such a strange expression in his eyes, that June felt pained and confused and sorrowful. An odd presentiment of coming trouble flashed across her mind as her eyes fell beneath his glance, and it seemed for a moment as though she felt a shivering dread of some approaching terror or sorrow.

The merry stream sparkled and flashed in the bright sunshine ; the trees nodded to one another from the grassy banks ; and far overhead the blue sky could be seen through the thick foliage. Now and then a bird would break into a song of gladness, making the air resound with his sweet melody, and the soft murmuring breezes stirred the wild-flowers, and made the dainty anemone bend lovingly to the ground. Beautiful indeed was the day and the landscape, but June's heart had lost its buoyancy.



With the quickness of the lightning's flash something had shattered her quiet pleasure, and awakened her from her calm thoughts of friendship and friendship's claims. Something intangible, but very real, something unseen, but distinctly felt. What is the influence, or chord, I wonder, that rudely snaps bonds and ties of friendly liking, and awakens one from fancied security against Cupid's machinations to a full realization of one's danger?

A woman says calmly : I *like* him ! But lo ! a word, a glance, a touch of the hand dashes aside the flimsy veil and she sees *love* in place of liking revealed.

June saw, at last, where she stood, and recognized how useless it was to satisfy herself by pretending ignorance ; and she saw, too, what Gerald's eyes and Gerald's manner were about to proclaim. But her face betrayed no trace of the discovery that had dawned upon her so suddenly, as she sat looking over the water, and her voice was quiet as she made some remark about the pleasant row and the scenery.



“I wonder, Miss June,” Gerald continued, after replying to her remark, “if we are good enough friends to admit of my boring you with a brief story?”

For a moment June was tempted to say no ; but an instant's reflection convinced her it would be useless to wound his feelings, or avert the trouble that was in store for her. She had been too quietly happy, too unconscious of the happiness, to hope for a continuance of her contentment, and then—ah, me ! one's bright day-dreams are so often shattered and crushed ! Like a ship idly floating with the tide, careless of danger so long as the dancing waves seem peaceful and safe, unaware of the sunken rocks treacherously waiting to wreck her, men and women float with the tide of contented, thoughtless happiness until suddenly they are aroused by some rude shock only to find themselves deprived of all guidance or support, helpless, hopeless, dazed by the sudden arousal from fancied security, and plunged into an abyss of amazement and despair.



So June felt when Gerald proffered his request to tell her the story—she was sure it was—of his life. She had almost imagined some mystery, or romance to be connected with him, and had often thought she would like to know what it was that made him so grave and old beyond his years. Yet, now that the opportunity was given her to hear it, she shrank from the disclosure, and wished to be spared the ordeal of listening to it. Still, it could not be helped; so she forced her features to wear an expression of unconcerned but friendly interest as she leaned back in the boat, and prepared to listen to what he was about to say.

“Years ago,” he began, “a youth, for he was nothing more, by one rash act blighted his own life and struck the death-blow to all his hopes of happiness. He was a Southerner, rash, impetuous, heedless, but at the same time honorable and true in every sense of the words. He was a theological student, and as unministerial in looks and actions as theological students generally are. While under the influence of



wine to a greater extent than he had ever before indulged in, he committed the indiscretion which proved so fatal to all his cherished plans and cast a pall over his whole life. "June!" he exclaimed, abruptly, "I may as well tell you—you must have imagined—that the youth was myself! It was during a vacation. I had returned home to celebrate the day which would find me the possessor of an immense fortune and my own master, the day which would be the twenty-first anniversary of my birth. Several of my fellow-students had accompanied me home, and my mother and sister, while trying to tone down my boisterous merriment, did all they could to promote our pleasure and my happiness. The auspicious day arrived, and the general festivities terminated in a ball, to which the *élite* of the neighborhood had received invitations. Among the many guests assembled there that night all were representatives of our haughtiest, wealthiest Virginia families, with but one exception. That exception was—our overseer's daughter. Do you wonder why she



was admitted on an equal footing with our aristocratic guests? I will tell you. In addition to her own maid, my mother had for several years engaged the services of Belle Huxton in many things beyond the capabilities of ignorant slaves. She was, indeed, more of a companion than a servant, for my sister's frequent absence from home made the large house seem lonely and dull to my mother, who was somewhat disinclined to making friends of the ladies of neighboring plantations. Being pretty, amiable, and quite well-bred for her station, Belle had become an inmate of our home, and was treated more as a relative than as the daughter of the plantation overseer. I met her but seldom, as I spent but a few days of each vacation at home; and up to the time of which I speak, had not noticed her beyond remarking that she was exceedingly pretty and quite lady-like. Still, I must say I protested against my mother's wish that she should take a place among our guests, for I knew it would cause much comment. But for once my mother was firm. I am sure, though, she



felt herself placed in a peculiar position, and her stern pride, usually so unbending, must have yielded greatly to her ideas of duty or obligation ere she would condescend to propose so new and striking a departure from her code of social laws. She supported her theory on the ground that, having called upon Belle's taste and assistance in so many ways during the day, she considered it merely a return for her willingness and readiness to lighten the burden which the manifold preparations had caused to rest upon my mother's shoulders. There was nothing more to be said, so the subject was dropped.

“ I will pass over the scenes and incidents of that night, for it was almost midnight before I lost all control over myself, and played the part of a fool. As a general thing I seldom tasted liquor of any kind ; but from being so often requested to drink to my own prosperity, I, that night, became not only slightly unsteady, but so much intoxicated that I completely lost all control of myself. I cannot tell you what I did—I do not know what I said. I had



a dim consciousness that I was paying very marked attention to a quiet but exceedingly beautiful girl, and that my attentions excited the notice and disapproval of my mother and guests. I was in such a whirl of excitement, of intoxication, that I only remembered a sentence whispered in my ear by Ned Carroll, my particular chum : ‘ Burton, come with me, and see if the fresh air won’t restore your senses. Good heavens, old fellow ! if you don’t regret this evening’s performance for the rest of your life you’ll be a fortunate man !’

“ But I sent him away with a few curt words, and soon after our guests departed. Ned and my servant carried me to my room, put me to bed, and left me to fall into a drunken sleep which lasted far into the next day.

“ The first thing which met my gaze when I opened my eyes at noon of the day following that fatal birthday, and tried to raise my heavy head from the pillows, was my mother’s pale, stern face.

“ ‘ Are you awake enough to give me your attention for a few moments ? ’ she asked.



“Something in her manner startled me, and aroused me from my stupor.

“‘What is it? Has any thing happened?’ I exclaimed, holding my hands to my aching head as I attempted to sit up.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### GERALD'S STORY.

“‘CAN you listen to me for a few moments?’ she asked, the cold, hard expression of her face softening a little as she met my glance. ‘You must know soon, and I may as well tell you at once. Gerald, Huxton is downstairs, in the library, overwhelmed with shame and grief at last night’s transactions. I will do him the justice to say I believe he regrets, as much as I do, your culpable foolishness; but spurred on by his wife and daughter he feels compelled to exhibit a guardianship over the



latter's interests. Gerald, do you know what you did last night? Listen. You, Gerald Burton, *my* son, and belonging to a family whose idol is Honor, whose proudest boast is that our name has never been dishonored or stained, are accused of playing with the affections of my overseer's daughter! Wait,' she added, as I was about to speak, 'first hear all I have to say. If you tell me, Gerald, that you said nothing to the girl which gave her reason to suppose you were earnest in your expressions of love (what a misnomer!), I will believe you, and help you out of your difficulty. On the contrary, if you led her to infer you meant everything you said to her—Gerald, you are a man of honor! What will you do?'

"Too bewildered to speak, I sat up in bed, and gazed at my mother, not taking in the full importance of her words. Then, with miraculous swiftness, the mist left my dizzy brain, and I began to reflect upon my conduct of the previous evening. Slowly I began to comprehend the lengths to which



I had gone, and dimly I remembered the vainly-regretted expressions I had used in my maudlin condition.

“ ‘Gerald!’—my proud mother bent over me, and endeavored to remove my hands from my face— ‘Gerald, speak to me! Don’t keep me in such suspense! *Did* you commit yourself irrevocably?’

“ My poor mother! I could not give her the assurance she wished to hear—could not quiet her anxiety. Memory came to my aid, and recalled vividly to my mind the knowledge that, not knowing to whom I was paying such devoted attention, I had proposed to and been accepted by my overseer’s daughter!

“ Let me pass over the scene that occurred a few hours later, when, upon entering the library, I confronted my mother, sister, and Huxton. Ned, poor fellow, much against his will, acknowledged having heard my insane proposal, also Miss Huxton’s acceptance. My sister was indignant, dismayed, shocked, each emotion following the other in rapid succession. My mother said nothing until



Huxton had left the room, and then she spoke, clearly and cuttingly. I will not repeat her words, but the substance was to the effect that there was but one way to avert the consequences. I must see Belle, explain my conduct fully, and trust to her generosity for a release. It was scarcely possible, she maintained, that the girl really loved me, for we were comparative strangers to one another ; and it was quite probable that I could convince her of the utter impossibility of my entertaining any regard for her.

“ ‘ Still, Gerald,’ she added, ‘ there is no excuse for you whatever. If you were still a minor I would assert my authority, and remove the obstacles which surround you ; but you are your own master, fully capable of deciding for yourself, and I am powerless to interfere. If Belle wishes to hold you to the engagement, you must submit to the degradation of marrying your overseer’s daughter. You cannot, *honorably*, withdraw. However, we can decide nothing until you have seen her ; and if I



may advise you, I would say you had better see her at once.'

"I did so, and the result may be imagined when I tell you that instead of meeting an artless, innocent girl, who had taken my attentions in the spirit they were offered, I found a wily, unscrupulous woman, who had disguised, for many years, beneath a seeming amiability, and a desire to be of service to her benefactors, a firm resolve to marry the heir of the Burton estate. Beautiful, Belle Huxton certainly was, but also illiterate and coarse. And no true woman, no *womanly* woman, would have told me as plainly as she did why she intended to hold me to my drunken protestations of love.

"'I do not love you, Gerald Burton,' she said, very composedly, 'and I know you despise me; but I *do* love your money, your lands, and the position I would have as your wife. In social standing there is a vast difference between us; but it can be bridged over, and I intend to hold you to your promises. You asked me to be your wife, and I ac-



cepted your offer. I *shall not* release you ! You Burtons pride yourselves upon being honorable men—tell me was it honorable for you to win my love, and then reject me at your lady mother's commands ? No, you asked me to marry you, and I will. I will never, never give you up, you or your money either ! ’

“ June, what could I do ? What would you have done, had you been in my place ? We Burtons *did* pride ourselves upon being honorable men, and though I had not won her love, it was quite as bad to ask her to marry me and then withdraw. She was actress enough to pretend her heart was broken, and I should always—no, I could not cause myself to feel I had played the part of a scoundrel ! A wretched fool I had made of myself, and no doubt it was a fitting punishment for my folly ; but it was very, very hard to bear. At first, seeing how beautiful Belle was, I conceived the idea of sending her to a distant part of the State to live with some friends of mine, where she could have all the advantages of



education and society necessary to enable her to occupy the position my wife would be called upon to fill ; but a few interviews gave me such thorough knowledge of her sordid, calculating, ignoble disposition that my momentary relief gave place to intense loathing and disgust. You know," he said, with a shadow of a smile, "men are willing to forgive a beautiful woman almost anything. I was young enough and susceptible enough to have been madly in love with Belle, had she possessed any attractions but those of face and form ; but her rude manners, and her eagerness for my money effectually repelled me, and made me curse my insane folly. I could not love her, I despised and detested her. My very soul revolted at the idea of making her my wife, yet was I not by honor bound to do so ?"

He paused as though awaiting a reply ; but June's averted face did not turn towards him. Her hands were clasped over the book in her lap, and she kept her eyes fixed upon the rippling river, so tantalizing in its brightness.



Like one in a dream, she but dimly realized how closely his story concerned herself. *His* story? How odd it seemed to think of him at all! Why, only yesterday they were the best of friends, without a thought of any deeper sentiment, and now—

Gerald vainly waited for her to speak. She did not—could not—answer him, and he spoke again, quickly, as if in haste to finish the story.

“The result of that interview was not favorable to my peace of mind. I had acted wrongly, and, as my mother had said, there was no excuse for my conduct; yet it seemed horrible that in return for one single rash act I should suffer for a lifetime. I could expect no consolation from my mother, whose fond hopes and hereditary pride received their death-blow through my culpable conduct. I could not exculpate myself, for I had erred and sinned grievously. Two days later I left my home, little better than an outcast. It was arranged that Belle and I should not meet for five years, and during that time we should hold no communication what-



ever. If, at the expiration of that period, she was still determined to marry me, I would be compelled to fulfil my part of the contract. So we parted, my mother and I, more in sorrow than in anger. It was a heavy blow for her, for I was her only son, and much of her pride and love was centred in me. But she thought it easier to send me from her, trusting to time to turn Belle's fickle fancy, and cause her to form an attachment for some one else. I went to Europe, and remained there until last spring. During all these years I have felt like a man who had all the burdens of life to carry upon his shoulders. Over every pleasure, every comfort, hung that dark cloud of despair and dread. It was misery to stay there, yet worse misery to return !

“The time will expire on the twentieth of this month, just a week from to-day. I shall write to Huxton to ascertain if his daughter is still living, and unmarried, and determined to marry *me*. If fate is against me, if I must pay the terrible penalty, June, tell me, has a man any right to wreck his



own life—and perhaps another's also—for a sense of honor, or a morbid desire to keep his family record spotless? June," he leaned forward and touched her folded hands, "June, did I act as you would have me act if you had known me then, and—loved me? June, can't you guess what makes my horrible bondage so much worse? My darling, turn your sweet face to me—let me see your eyes! Dare I tell you how much I love you? Have I the right to do so? June, look at me and hear me! I never loved until I met you, and I love you with all the fervency of a man's first and only affection. Love you! Is it love or idolatry? You have filled every corner of my heart until you seem to be part of myself, and yet—oh! my darling, my darling!"

He caught her hands in his, and grasped them so tightly that he hurt her slender fingers. She tried to draw them away, tried to answer him. But she could not; her lips refused to move, and for once at least, her presence of mind and self-possession deserted her completely. She could only look at him



through blinding tears, and feel as if she had slipped from the bright, beautiful world into a maze of hideous doubts and disappointments. He loved her, she knew he did ; but he had no right to tell her so, and she had no right to listen to his impassioned words. Dimly she realized the import of his story. He was not hers, he was the promised husband of another. Yet he loved her, loved her deeply and truly. What was he saying now ? Oh ! it was cruel to torture her so ! And it was wrong to listen to him !

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### *JUNE'S ANSWER.*

HE waited for her to speak, almost fearing that an indignant rejection would be her answer ; then, as she remained silent, he released her hands, feeling disheartened and rebuked. He did not know what thoughts were running riot through her brain



—he could only judge from outward indications ; and so judging he said, sadly :

“Forgive me, dear. It was very presuming of me to think you could love me, for you are so sweet and beautiful and good, and I am so unworthy of you. I need not ask if you could care for me, for I see now that—”

“Gerald !” the sweet face was uplifted to his, and the little hands sought his own ; “Gerald, I love you. I did not know it until this morning—I thought I was giving you nothing but friendship, but I find it was—it is—love. I am not too good for you ; indeed at this moment I feel wretchedly impious and wicked ! But you must not think of me until you ascertain whether you have the right to do so. It is difficult to decide who is the most miserable at present, and I would not add to your sorrow by insinuating that you are not true to yourself or to me when you forget or ignore the story you have just related. If that—that girl is married, or willing to release you, I’ll willingly accept your



love, and give mine in return ; but until you have seen her, or have heard from her, you must say nothing about your regard for me."

She spoke bravely, though her eyes were moist with tears, and her cheeks flushed by the effort it had been for her to speak so plainly. And she spoke so firmly, so truly, that Gerald forced himself to bow to her will, and check the eager words trembling upon his tongue. He raised her hand to his lips—he would have given worlds for the privilege of taking her in his arms, but he dared not. He could not claim her until he knew he was free to do so. As she said, he had no right to breathe words of love to her, and he was far too honorable to disregard her request. Wait ! How could he, without even the hope of success ?

At that moment how fully he appreciated the extent of his boyish folly ! How thoroughly did he realize the misery and hopelessness into which one little act had plunged him !

He glanced over the water, sparkling and dancing



in the golden sunshine, then up at the tree-tops, where the birds were singing so gayly—every thing seemed so bright, so fair, so joyous, every thing but his own sad heart. Every thing? Ah! no! the beautiful face before him had lost its happy, contented expression; the frank, dark eyes had become saddened and moist. Their glances met as he sat looking at her, and for one full moment eyes plainly revealed what lips were forbidden to divulge.

Then June turned her head, and said quietly, “Take me home, Gerald.”

He obeyed. Not another word was spoken until they reached the landing. Then, as he assisted her from the boat, he said, in a voice that trembled in spite of his efforts to speak calmly:

“Did I err in making my confession? Should I have kept it to myself?”

Her eyes met his bravely as she answered:

“I think not, Gerald—it was best to tell me. I pity myself, but oh! I pity you a thousand times more! I wish I could help you! I hate myself for



being the cause of your sorrow ! If only you had never met me !”

“ Hush, love,” he said gravely, “ you must not say that. If the worst is realized—if I have found you only to lose you—I will still thank heaven for the knowledge that there is one noble, brave woman in the world, and that she loves me. You *do* love me, dear, do you not ? Yet, if we have met only to be parted—oh, June, June ! how much unhappiness one rash act can bring to a man, and to those whom he loves as well !”

“ You will not mind,” he added, “ if I leave you here, will you ? I must confess I am not brave enough to meet them all at the house. And, June, I won’t come to you until I am sure I am free—if I can remain away from you. To meet you day after day, knowing the hour of parting *must* come, will only make the bitter pain the harder to bear ; and I want to spare you all I can. Will you regret my absence ?”

“ Gerald !” her voice sounded strangely harsh as



she uttered that one word. Then, before he could realize her intention, she turned from him, and walked hastily towards the house, not trusting herself to remain longer in his presence.

Her one wish was to be alone. Imagine, then, her dismay, when, upon emerging from the grove after leaving Gerald so suddenly, she found herself in the midst of the group of croquet-players gathered on the lawn, and assailed by a perfect storm of questions and laughing remarks concerning the disappearance of her escort. Forcing her lips to smile, she tried to reply naturally, though her face was pale, and her eyes ached with the weight of unshed tears. Only Kate noticed her paleness and forced gayety, and she promptly decided to free June from her tormentors.

“June!” she exclaimed, “if you ever succeed in getting away from this crowd, you’ll find two letters in your room awaiting a speedy perusal. Lunch will be served at one o’clock to-day, as mamma will not return until then, and you will have time to



answer your letters if they need immediate attention. Run away now, and tell us all the news when next we meet !”

June made some laughing response, and gladly escaped to the house and her own room, where she remained for the rest of the day. Kate knocked at the door a few minutes after the lunch-bell rang, to see if she was ready to go down stairs ; but when she caught a glimpse of June’s white face and heavy eyes, her pretty features changed their jesting expression to one of concern.

“ What is the matter, June ?” she asked, in some alarm ; “ have you received any ill news ? You’re as white as a ghost !”

“ No,” June responded, with a faint smile, “ it is only a headache. The sun was so hot, and we went such a long distance down the river—”

“ I wonder where Gerald Burton’s senses were ?” Kate exclaimed vehemently ; “ he might have known it was too warm to go out on the water this morning ! Now you’ll have one of your headaches



all the rest of the day ! And there's the archery match for this afternoon, and the tableaux for this evening, and the—oh, dear ! it's just too bad !”

“ Oh ! I'll feel well enough to assist you this evening. A few hours' quiet rest will banish the headache, and I'll promise not to desert you.”

“ Well, then,” and Kate gave a sigh of relief, “ your promises are always kept to the letter, so I won't borrow trouble. I'll bathe your head, and darken the room, and no one shall disturb you without first obtaining my permission.”

June submitted patiently to her ministrations. Not for worlds would she have told her she wished for nothing but solitude, yet how she longed to be by herself ! Kate's voice jarred upon her nerves with the sound of playful mockery, and the slow, monotonous movement of her hand was like adding fuel to the fire ; but her sympathy was so genuine and loving that it was impossible to do otherwise than accept it with apparent willingness ; and after the manner of many a person who yields to tor-



menting caresses rather than pain the giver of them, June received all Kate's attentions, and felt deeply thankful when she left the room bearing with her various supplies of camphor, cologne, and other remedies.

One is led to question whether there is not as much suffering experienced in the few moments which elapse between the time one's sympathizing friend says, "Well, I know you wish to be by yourself, so I'll leave you," and the precise second which heralds the closing of the door upon the departing person, as there is when the first blow of sorrow falls. The actual grief is hard enough to bear, but the thought of meeting it face to face, alone and unaided, is doubly trying.

Left to yourself! That means leaving you to fight out the battle unseen and unmolested. Left to yourself! Then you can groan and weep and match love and inclination against duty and necessity, and if you are beaten and conquered and crushed, who will know it but yourself? Left to



yourself ! Great Heaven ! Can one experience greater misery than that sometimes is ?

So June thought, as she reflected upon the morning's painful ending. The transition from quiet security to restless uncertainty had been so sudden that she was troubled and bewildered by the change, and found it difficult to realize the difference. Yesterday Gerald Burton was her pleasant, agreeable friend, undemonstrative, unlover-like ; to-day, by the confession of his love, he had brought a hitherto unknown sorrow to her, and an additional burden to himself, turning pleasure into misery, and friendship into doubt. Why could not things have remained as they were ? How she wished she could close her eyes and slip out of the world without further anguish or trouble !



## CHAPTER IX.

## THINKING.

ALL that long, dreary afternoon Jane reflected upon present and future troubles as she dimly realized them ; and during that time she suffered as intensely as only a woman can who loves deeply and truly, yet has no assurance that she loves wisely. If she had but known, or if Gerald—but no, she was far too generous to indulge in that thought, and she could not censure him. Besides, was it not barely possible that she was worrying about an improbable grief ? Perhaps the overseer's daughter had long ago married happily, and ere this lost all recollection of Gerald Burton, and her desire to possess his money and estate. Would it not be as well to refrain from thinking that he could be nothing to her until she received indisputable evidence to that effect ?

To think, with June, was to act. Having decided



that it was best to let the future take care of itself, she tried to put her theory into practice. To say she resolutely closed her heart to all thoughts of Gerald and his love would scarcely be true ; but she resolved, and wisely, to indulge in no more surmises. If sorrow and disappointment awaited her, it would be as well to avert the trouble as long as possible, and if Gerald could never be hers, it would be time enough to grieve when the moment of parting positively arrived.

June's decision may seem very cold and heartless ; but the ways of sorrowing are as many and as widely different as the ways of loving. Boisterous grief is not always sincere, or excessive love durable ; and the " quiet heart " suffers in silence, bearing patiently the fiercest pangs of sorrow. June, though almost crushed by the sudden blow to her happiness, had no intention of proclaiming it to the world, or of dwelling upon the trouble herself ; and with her, action speedily followed resolution in every instance. So, when the last rays of sunshine gleamed



through the window, she summoned her maid to aid her in preparing for the evening, and when ready to descend to the parlor, elegantly and faultlessly attired, she was as lovely and composed as though sorrow had never touched her. But sad enough her sweet face was, as she lingered by the window a few moments, before leaving her room, looking out on the bright river that flashed and sparkled as it had in the morning ; and sad enough she felt, as almost unconsciously she softly repeated to herself Arnold's sorrowful "Too Late :"

" Each on his own straight line we move,  
And some find death ere they find love,  
So far apart their lives are thrown  
From the twin soul that halves our own.

" And sometimes, by still harder fate,  
The lovers meet, but meet too late.  
Thy heart is mine ! True, true, ah, true !  
Then love, thy hand ! Ah, no ! Adieu."

But her face bore no trace of sadness when she joined the merry group upon the piazza a few mo-



ments later, and replied laughingly to the merry salutations that greeted her. One quick look she gave to see if Gerald was present ; but with a sensation of great relief she found him absent from the gay group, and parried with great skill all queries concerning his non-appearance. Kate shrewdly suspected that June could have given all the information necessary, but she could not question her then.

What a long, tiresome evening it had been, June thought, when late at night the revellers retired to their rooms. Never had everybody and everything seemed so utterly stupid and tedious, or the time so slow and dreary ; and it was with sincere pleasure that she closed and locked her door, feeling secure against all intruders. Did she close her eyes in peaceful slumber for the rest of the night ? Had she not resolved to think no more of Gerald Burton until she was assured of her right to do so ?

A woman's heart and a woman's love are curious studies, and June was no exception to her sex in advocating a theory she found impossible to put



into practice. It seems to me a woman is never more contradictory or inconsistent than when she discovers her heart is no longer in her own keeping, or that some one else claims her thoughts and her attentions.

June's self-promises to put Gerald and his love away from her thoughts were kept as one may imagine. Can any woman prevent herself from thinking of the man she loves, whether it is right or wrong for her to do so? If any sleep visited her eyes that night, it was long after her friends had journeyed to the land of dreams, and even then her slumbers were disturbed and restless.

Slowly, drearily, passed the rest of the week. In all that time June saw Gerald but once, and then by mere accident. Kate and her cousin were out driving one morning, and as they passed through an unfrequented lane they saw Gerald a short distance beyond, sauntering along as though he felt perfectly indifferent and listless concerning no one in particular, but everything in general. Kate drew in her



ponies, and, without any preliminary conversation, proceeded to lecture him for absenting himself from Roselawn. He talked to Kate, but gazed at June, and he looked so grave and sad, his eyes had such a mournful expression in their brown depths, that she could not trust herself to speak to him. He assured Kate he had a most excellent reason for remaining away from herself and friends, but that he promised himself the pleasure of calling in a few days. He contemplated going home in a week or two, but would certainly see them all before his departure.

Kate appealed to June for assistance in persuading him to drive home with them; but he abruptly declined the invitation without offering any reason for the refusal.

“You’re a perfect bear,” asserted Kate, touching the horses as she spoke, “and I don’t wonder that June is indignant at your slighting us so openly. But we won’t ask you again! We don’t like refusals, do we?”



June forced herself to utter a few polite words of regret, but she did not glance at Gerald as she spoke ; indeed, she had not fully met his gaze during the entire conversation ; and it was with a feeling of intense relief that she saw him turn away and felt the motion of the carriage.

“ June ! ” exclaimed Kate, as they drove away, “ I never knew you to be so contrary and unreasonable as you have been during the past few days ! I am quite sure you are the cause of Gerald Burton’s melancholy looks and love-lorn mien, but I must confess I don’t understand it. As a general thing I can put two and two together as quickly as any one can ; but in this instance twice two obstinately refuses to make the sum total four ! What have you done to him ? Whose fault is it ? Or are you both to blame ? ”

June hesitated before replying. She did not care to confide the story to Kate, at least not yet. Her sympathy would have been very sweet, but she indulged in the hope that none would be necessary.



“I have nothing to tell you, Kate,” she said, at last; “at least not now. If you’ll promise not to ask any questions for three or four days I’ll tell you all you wish to know at the end of that time. Until then please don’t refer to the subject again.”

“Very well,” returned Kate, curbing her curiosity, though feeling disappointed at its not being gratified. “I’ll wait until you are ready to tell me. But are you going to Mrs. De Kaye’s to-night? You know we were all invited there for this evening, and though it may not be pleasant for you to meet Gerald, I don’t see how you can refuse to go without hurting the old lady’s feelings. She’s so fond of you.”

“I suppose I must go, but indeed I’d rather not.”

“She would never forgive you!”

June smiled. She was fully aware of the love old Mrs. De Kaye lavished upon her, and entertained no fears of its being withdrawn simply because she refused an invitation to Nookside. Besides, she



dreaded Gerald's presence far more than she feared his aunt's displeasure.

But fate, in the form of a severe thunder-storm, detained them at home that evening, for which June was devoutly grateful. Only three days of suspense remained, and then—what?

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## CHAPTER X.

### BONDAGE.

AND Gerald? When June left him so abruptly that morning in the grove, he stood and gazed after her until he lost sight of her graceful figure; then he quickly retraced his steps to the river, where his boat was moored. To embark and row swiftly home did not require much time; and certainly, had he been rowing for a race or a wager, the oars could not have dashed in and out of the water with greater velocity.

Kate would have had sufficient reason for calling



him a stern, grave man, could she have seen him then. His white, fixed features, compressed lips, and sad eyes, spoke plainly of the pain he was enduring, and clearly portrayed his heartfelt despair. Knowing Belle Huxton's determination to secure through him the wealth and position she coveted, he was satisfied he could hope for no release from her claim upon him. And yet how he hated her ! How he cursed the insane folly which had overshadowed his life for so many years ! How bitterly he reproached himself for that one mad act !

But despite his despair, despite the loathing he experienced in regard to the union of hands, not hearts, the noble nature of the man asserted itself, even though his own hand dealt the death-blow to his happiness. Most men, indeed almost any man, in Gerald's position, though honorable enough to regret that boyish escapade, would nevertheless have regarded it as youthful folly, refusing to be held responsible for the consequences. Many would have ignored it from the first, and have ridi-



culed the bare possibility of being held to the protestations of fancied love. With other boyish acts, they would have dismissed it from their recollection, caring little for the real or supposed wrong done to the overseer's daughter. Others, perhaps, would have felt bound by honor to Belle until they loved truly and equally, and then her claims would have been banished without hesitation.

But Gerald, whose ideas of honor were so high as to almost touch the extreme, could not satisfy his conscience by any of those releases. Honor to him was more than life itself. To keep his name untarnished had been his constant care, and it was a hard struggle now to do what was right, and pleasing to himself as well. Death was preferable to dishonor, he thought, and though a weaker man would have sought escape in suicide, Gerald could not have found refuge in such a step. It would be so easy, he thought, so easy to lean over the boat's side, and quietly slip down beneath the water's bright surface ; so easy to put aside all trouble and heart-



ache, to drown care and conscience, to escape the sorrow that probably awaited him in the future. So easy—yet he could not do it.

Whatever the pain or suffering he still had to endure, he must bear it unflinchingly, and bear it without a murmur. A coward's fate he could not make his own.

As he had told June, the five years of probation would expire in a week ; but not having patience to wait in suspense longer than was absolutely necessary, he decided to discover the worst at once, and therefore determined to write to his mother that same day, and if possible learn Belle's decision.

When he reached the house, he was told that his aunt had gone out for the day ; so there was nothing to prevent him from being as quiet as he pleased, without exciting comment from his keensighted old relative. He wrote his letter, then walked to the village to mail it. Having done that, nothing remained but for him to wait as patiently as possible for a reply. He resolved to



stay away from Roselawn until he learned the worst, or best, and during that apparently interminable week, he saw June but once, when he met the two cousins in the lane.

Solitude, as a general thing, is one of the masculine privileges. If a man is ill-natured, unhappy, out of sorts generally, he can mope and sigh and feel miserable, and be as reticent as he wishes. A good cigar will afford him great consolation, and he can be as cross and disagreeable as it best suits him, placing it all to the account of business troubles ; but a woman—ah, me ! we have to smile our sweetest, and be our wittiest and brightest even while the fiercest pains are riddling our hearts, as though they were patent targets, where the bullets go through the elastic surface and leave no sign.

Two days dragged slowly by, and then, one morning while sitting in the library, reading aloud to his aunt, the letter he so impatiently expected was handed him. Feeling sure of her sympathy and advice he had told Aunt Janet the whole story ; and



the knowledge that some one shared with him the heavy burden of anxiety, to say nothing of the comfort he derived from her bright anticipations, helped him wonderfully.

“Read your letter here, Gerald,” she said as he was about to leave the room; “read it here, and I’ll watch your face while you are reading. Then I’ll know what it is, and you’ll be spared the pain of telling me.”

He tore the envelope open, and with eager eyes perused its contents. The fond old lady sitting opposite him, closely scrutinizing his face as he read, saw it suddenly turn pale to the lips, then the letter fell from his hand, and as his head sank upon the table before him she knew the worst was realized. There was a world of silent sympathy in the touch of her hand as she rested it upon his head, sympathy which her trembling voice would not permit her to utter. Then she left him—knowing well it would be the kindest thing for her to do—left him to fight alone the fiercest battle of shattered hopes



and black despair a man ever engaged in without losing life or reason. But we never die when we wish to, never lose the power to think and feel and suffer. It always remains with us, no matter how earnestly we desire to escape from it.

The black waves of despair, so poetically described, surge over us, sometimes almost bearing away life itself, and deluding us with the sweet hope that as easily can we slip out of this dreary world of care and heartache ; but the illusion is dispelled, and when the dark waters roll beyond we find ourselves left in the midst of a heart-rending wreck, where love and faith, and all things that brighten life, are swept away or tarnished by the waters.

All the rest of the day Gerald remained in that position, his arms resting upon the table, his face resting on them. The last faint gleam of twilight flickered through the room when he at length raised his head, disclosing a face so white and drawn with pain that it looked fully ten years older than it



had a few short hours ago. If time could be measured by the amount of sorrow we experience in a brief moment, how endless the days and years would seem ! To gauge that dismal day's length by Gerald's suffering would be to metamorphose hours into centuries.

Dazed and dulled as his feelings were, however, he soon realized keenly how necessary it was for him to arouse for action. Besides reconciling himself to the inevitable he must tell June of the letter he had received from his mother, in which she told him of Belle's determination to exact the fulfilment of his promise.

Clearly his first duty was to convey the information to her, and to see her just once before he left for home was the one great desire of his heart. Painful as the interview would be, hard as separation would be, to both, the parting words had to be spoken, the last farewell said. And why delay ? Since the terrible truth had to be made known to her, the only woman he had ever loved, why post-



pone the sorrow, or keep June in suspense? as if waiting would make it less terrible for either, or soften the blow in any way!

He held his hand to his head for a few moments—it ached and whirled so he could scarcely think—then he arose to leave the room. He would go to June, to tell her he could never claim her for his own, that they must part. He would see her now, at once!

He walked to the door, opened it, and stepped into the hall. In that half-dazed, half-unconscious manner, he entered the cosy sitting-room where his aunt was, to tell her of his intention of going to June.

He reached her side and was about to speak, when, to her dismay, he suddenly reeled forward, and, without a word or a sigh, fell at her feet insensible.



## CHAPTER XI.

## THE LETTER OF DOOM.

To summon the servants and have him carried back to the library was but an instant's work ; and as the tender-hearted old friend gazed upon the white, still face, she felt it would be far more merciful to leave him in that condition, oblivious to his sorrow, than to restore him to consciousness. But even as that thought flashed through her brain, a slight movement from the recumbent figure told her he was reviving, and bending over him she asked if he felt better.

As she spoke, he put out his hand, and caught hold of hers, grasping it as though it would keep him from falling. The room was so dark she could not see his face ; but in that painfully tight clasp she felt the anguish he could not put in words. She scarcely knew what consolation to offer him, mere words seemed such mockery.



They were both silent—the loving old aunt, who felt so keenly the trouble she could not banish, and he, the strong man, crushed beneath the blow that placed beyond his reach the woman he loved.

Aunt Janet was the first to break the silence, as her tremulous voice whispered, “My poor boy, my poor, dear boy !”

Then Gerald loosened his grasp of her hand, and raised himself to a sitting posture, as he said slowly :

“How much can a man endure, I wonder, without losing life or reason ? I believe there are some Christian sentiments inherent in my nature, but just at present I feel like a boat without a rudder, or a man who is helplessly cast adrift. I’ve been thinking of one thing all day long, and that is to wish I could die at once, for there’s nothing worth living for left me now ! Aunt Janet, why don’t you reprove me, why don’t you tell me I am foolish, wicked, rightly punished, anything you please ? But, oh ! say something kind to me, too, for I am utterly miserable !”



“Something kind? Oh, Gerald! as if I could say any thing else,” she answered sadly. “Tell me all you wish me to know, and I’ll do my best to comfort you.”

Then he told her the contents of the letter; told her how horrible it all seemed to him; how miserably helpless he was to avert the union he so heartily loathed, and how hard it was to leave June. All the pent-up thoughts and feelings of the past five years found full vent in that passionate outburst, and Mrs. De Kaye felt herself almost powerless to advise or comfort him. Long and earnestly they conversed, but not cheerfully. She tried to convince him that honor did not demand the sacrifice of June’s happiness as well as his own; that no reasonable being could expect him to fulfil the promise made in a moment of youthful folly; that it was absurd, nay, wicked, to insist on so ruining his life and aims—but vainly did she reason with him. Not for one moment did he entertain the idea of releasing himself from his hateful bondage, and she soon saw



how useless it was to continue the subject. His strict regard for the sacredness of a promise made, his high sense of honor, which even the complete failure of his dearest desire could not shake, all made it impossible for him to save himself from the fate his own indiscretion had worked. There was no release for him unless it came from Belle Huxton. And too well did he know how tenacious was her grasp upon his wealth and position—not his love. If she had loved him, even in the first days, he might have reconciled himself to the inevitable, and possibly found happiness in some degree; but his one interview with her, when she so plainly revealed her object in holding him to his brief fancy, and so thoroughly destroyed his respect for her as a lady, convinced him completely of the utter folly of hoping to give her even the faintest shadow of esteem, and made the idea of loving her, or of being loved, a hideous, dark impossibility.

It was late when their conversation ended, late when they retired to their rooms—she, to grieve and



weep over her boy's sorrow, and he to pace the floor restlessly until the loud peal of the breakfast bell summoned the sleepers to the morning meal.

When they met at the table, Aunt Janet's heart ached as she gazed at his sad, white face and mournful eyes ; but only an interested observer would have noticed anything unusual in his appearance or manners. Always reserved, always quiet, he had but little difficulty in concealing any emotion, or in feigning a calmness he did not feel, in order to quiet Aunt Janet's undefined fears.

He had decided to see June that evening, for he felt further suspense to be intolerable ; besides, he intended to return home the following day, and the parting, since it had to be, could not be delayed. Immediately after breakfast he dispatched a brief note to June, inclosing his mother's letter, and asking her to see him that evening, as he intended leaving Aunt Janet early the next morning. Only a short interview he asked for, and then he would leave her—forever. Would she see him, and alone ?



The note and inclosure were no surprise to June. It is true she had been hoping against hope, but with a faint heart and with no expectation of Gerald's release. The thorn beneath the rose pricked her white fingers when she tried to grasp the pretty flower, and the faint wound was a constant source of anxiety, even in her brightest moments. The rose of his love, the thorn of Belle Huxton's claim upon him! Could she forget the one or ignore the other? And now the end had come—the end of love, and joy, and peace, but the beginning, to both, of such misery, such utter, intolerable wretchedness of heart and mind, that the burden seemed beyond their power to bear.

Would she see him? Ah! was refusal possible? As he said, the parting must be for all time. For a few brief moments he would belong to her, and then, oh! horror! she must give him up to another—yield him to an unloving and unloved wife, to a long life of unhappiness and disappointment!



## CHAPTER XII.

## PARTING.

It was late when Gerald reached Roselawn that night, so late that June had almost ceased to expect him. Kate and herself were alone, sitting on the veranda, in the calm, bright moonlight. The atmosphere was redolent with the perfume of roses and jasmine, the leaves rustled slowly, almost imperceptibly, in the faint night air, and beyond the lawn lay the now placid river, silent in the white light of the moon. All was hushed and peaceful in the lovely scene, and the two girlish figures, sitting there so quietly, completed the picture. Kate was leaning against one of the pillars, indulging in pleasant thoughts, and thankful, as she expressed it, to be alone with her cousin. June, in the shadow of a heavy clematis vine, was thinking so intently of what the evening held in store for her, that not until Gerald stood beside her was she aware of his pres-



ence. So quietly had he approached them that Kate gave a slight scream of surprise and alarm.

“How you startled me!” she exclaimed, holding out her hand; “since when have you adopted the method of stealing upon one unawares? June and I are revelling in the pleasures of an evening all to ourselves. She’s dreaming among the clematis vines, and I’ve been gazing at the moon. Give an account of yourself—you have not honored us with your society for a whole week! Are you feeling pleasant and agreeable now, or are you still deep down in the ‘blues?’

“‘Come you in peace, or come you in war,  
Or to dance at our bridal, young Lochinvar?’

But I’ve forgiven you—go make your confessions to June. I’m afraid, though, you will find her more obdurate!”

He uttered some pleasant reply to Kate’s merry words, then seated himself beside the silent, white-robed figure partly hidden by the heavy vines.

Without giving him an opportunity to speak to



June, Kate asked him some questions which demanded a lengthy answer, and in the ensuing conversation she could take no part. Screened by the shadows, Gerald's hand closed upon the small fingers resting on the arm of the chair beside him, and remained there until Kate declared it was growing too chilly to remain out of doors any longer.

"We won't take possession of the parlor, June, let's be cosey in the library. You don't mind, do you?" she asked.

Now Kate's keenly observant eyes had easily detected the change in the pleasant friendship hitherto existing between June and Mr. Burton, and after deciding that some trivial misunderstanding had caused the estrangement, she resolved to play the part of mediator, if possible. With that end in view, therefore, she excused herself shortly after entering the house, on the plea of going to her mother, who was slightly indisposed, and left them alone.

How June's heart throbbed as the door closed after Kate, leaving her alone with Gerald! How



nervously she toyed with the lace upon her sleeve ! She could feel that he was gazing steadily at her as she stood under the full glare of the gaslight, could feel how anxiously he was waiting for a glance or a word. She raised her face to his after a moment's silence, her lips curved in a faint, sad smile ; but before she could speak he was at her side, his arms around her in a close, tight embrace, holding her as if he would never again release her.

“ My darling ! my love ! ” he exclaimed, imprinting hot, passionate kisses upon cheek and brow and lips ; “ my own, for one short half hour, if no longer ! Lift your sweet face to mine, June, and tell me you love me ! It is not wrong—you won't refuse—don't send me from you without a word of regret or pity ! Tell me again, for the last time, that you *do* care for me, even though we part to-night never to meet again ! ”

“ Is it necessary for me to tell you that, Gerald ? ” she asked, raising her head from his shoulder ; “ could anything but my love for you induce me to



accept your caresses, or permit you to utter words you should not speak? After to-night we will probably never meet again. I hope not—I pray not—I could not endure another interview unless I had the right to your presence, and that you cannot give me. I love you, Gerald, love you with all the power and intensity of my woman's heart—love you so well that to give you a happy, satisfied life I would willingly sacrifice my own! If I had known—if you had only told me—you might have been spared this sorrow, and your other trouble would have been easier to bear! Say farewell to me now, Gerald, the delay only makes it harder for us both. Clasp me in your arms again, rest your lips upon mine once more, and then, oh! if you love me, in mercy leave me!”

Leave her! There was anguish worse than death in the thought, yet he was forced to submit! A few more kisses, a few more glances in the lovely brown eyes raised to his, and in whose depths he saw the deep, pure love-light shining, and then he



must leave her, leave the only woman he ever loved, to go to the woman he loathed, but whom he must marry ! Strong man though he was, the despair of that moment completely unnerved him. To find her only to lose her, the one woman in the world who had entered his heart, and filled his life with thoughts of love and peace and joy ; never again to feel the soft touch of her head upon his breast, or the clinging caress of her sweet lips ; never again, in all the many years left to him, to see her face or hear her voice ! How hard, how bitterly, terribly hard it was !

“ Hush,” she said, in answer to his words as he expressed those thoughts, “ you must not rebel. Perhaps you will learn to love your wife yet, Gerald. If you marry Belle, surely love must come in time. You will forget me and be happy—”

“ How can you be so cruel, June ?” he interrupted, folding his arms about her again ; “ I never thought of loving until I met you, and for me to forget you is utterly impossible. I can only love once—



I shall love you till I die. Kiss me again, my darling, for the last time, and I solemnly swear no other lips shall remove the last touch of yours. Kiss me, and I will carry your caress to my grave, unsullied and sweet, dear, the one memento of a love that has been unspeakably precious, though it must always remind me of a sorrow that is harder to endure than death itself. Oh! June! to die and leave you would be terrible, if I were free! But to love you and live without you—how *can* I do it? Don't think me selfish, dear;" he added, "it is as hard for you, I know. Forgive me if I seem inconsiderate!"

There was a mute appeal in the pale face uplifted to his, a piteous sorrow in the brown eyes; and in mercy to her, though to leave her was almost impossible, he held her to his heart in a close embrace, kissed her hair, her eyes, her brow, and then, with one long, last kiss upon the lips quite powerless to speak, and a lingering look at the face so dear to him, he left her.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE BITTER END.

THEY never met again. When he left her after that last passionate glance at her sweet face, it was to enter into a loveless, cheerless union with Belle Huxton. During their first interview, when he reached home, he explained his feelings towards her, told of his love for another, and gave her distinctly to understand that she would receive nothing from him but the scantiest civilities. He would not pretend to offer her even respect or esteem. He would never forget he was bound to her, and would act accordingly, but beyond that recognition he would give her nothing. Perhaps he hoped to effect a release by showing so plainly how he regarded her ; but the hope was futile.

Two days later the hateful ceremony took place, and almost immediately after the mismatched couple sailed for Europe. Upon their return, after an



absence of two years, Gerald resumed and finished his studies, was ordained, and given charge of one of the leading churches in his native city. He was a true, faithful minister to his congregation, devoted to their interests, and enabled, by his wealth, to benefit his parish by deed as well as precept. Of his home life, a brief description was given Kate by a friend who met him shortly after his installation.

“His wife is a beautiful woman, but not strictly refined, notwithstanding her European experience. She can be very charming when it pleases her, but she lacks the stamp of a true lady. And Burton—well, I pity him from the bottom of my heart. You have heard his story, Miss Kate, haven’t you? Perhaps you can give me a little information on the subject then. I was told he loved a beautiful girl, but being engaged to his present wife he considered himself in honor bound to marry her, even though he sacrificed his happiness by doing so. He was fanatically wrong, I think, for it was a sacrifice he



should not have made. Besides, Mrs. Burton is totally incapable of loving, or of appreciating love given her. He is courteous to her, but no more. He seldom speaks to her, never looks at her if he can avoid it, and once when his hand accidentally touched hers I saw him shudder from head to foot! She knows he loathes the very sight of her, and glories in the knowledge. Poor Burton! He was worthy of a better life, or rather a happier life, than he leads. He looks cold and sad, and aged beyond his years. I don't believe he ever smiles—I am sure of it. He is constantly keeping guard over his words and actions, and his eyes have such a mournful, hopeless expression that I never could bear to meet them. The fact of his having really loved some one else accounts for his sadness—it certainly adds to his burden. It always seemed to me he was a man to whom the happiness of a real, perfect love would be denied. Yet he was such a handsome, generous, high-souled fellow that you would think life would give him nothing but com-



plete bliss. Do you know any thing about his unfortunate attachment, Miss Kate? Was it returned, or was he jilted? The latter seems improbable."

Kate knew, for June had told her all; but she did not think it necessary to give the desired information.

Years have passed since Gerald left the woman he loved to wed the woman he hated. The "harder fate" which separated him from June has mercifully kept them apart. One never knows how much can be borne until the trial is made. It is said poor humanity always receives some reward hereafter, if worthy of it, for any self-sacrifice or observance of duty hard to perform, and it is to be hoped a kind Providence will give June and Gerald, in the other world, the happiness denied them here.

June never married. She still lives with her aunt and cousin, a sad, beautiful woman, beloved by all who know her. And Gerald, in his Southern home, surrounded by every luxury wealth can give, possessor of a beautiful wife, the esteemed rector of a



loving people, walks through life like one who, having put his hand to the plough dare not look back.

Often, when alone in his study, the book or manuscript will fall from his hand, and he will drop his head upon the desk before him, with a low-toned exclamation of repressed pain. The thought of what he had lost by his own mad folly still has power to hurt him, and the memory of June's face will never leave him. The promise he made her, of keeping her last kiss upon his lips through life, has never been broken. He will take it with him to his grave, for no other lips have touched his since he left her.

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If this simple story seems improbably sad, or my readers object to its termination, let me assure them "truth is stranger than fiction," and that this is an "over true tale."







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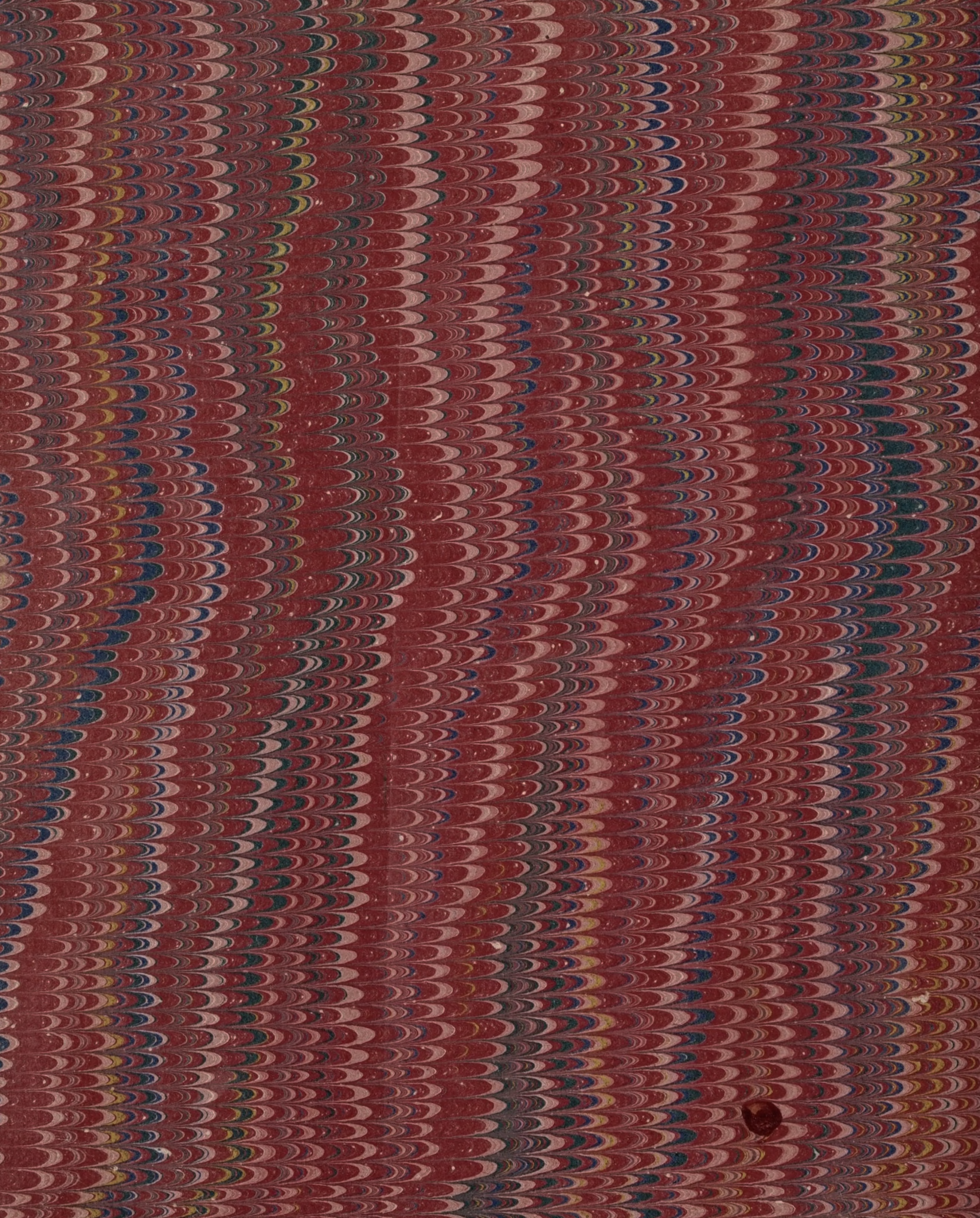


















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